

A Level Dance Component 2



Area of Study: Compulsory set Work
& Area of Study

Practitioner focus: CHRISTOPHER BRUCE

Professional works: ROOSTER (1991)

Rooster Fact File

Choreographer	Christopher Bruce
Company	Rooster was created for Ballet du Grand Theatre de Geneve
First performance	Premier: 10 th October 1991 by the Ballet du Grand Théâtre de Genève British Premier: 28 th October 1992 by LCDT Rambert Dance Company: 8 th December 1994
Dance style	Contemporary ballet
Choreographic style	<p>Revisits previous scenes as a way of instilling an idea e.g ROOSTER (1991) & SWANSONG (1987).</p> <p>Symbolic repetition to shape the structure of many of his works, images to open and close e.g GHOST DANCES (1981) & SEARGENT EARLY'S DREAM (1984).</p> <p>Dancers have their own interpretation of a theme or dance, and a strong sense of musicality and characterization e.g SWANSONG (1987) & MOONSHINE (1993)</p>
Theme	<p>Rooster is an evocation of the mid 1960's using music, dance, gesture and costume to create the feeling of a Saturday night out. It examines the relationship between men and women from the assumption that the men have an innate advantage, although there are points in the work where the women triumph. Each song section segues into the following section gradually building to a climax performed by the full company.</p> <p>Representation, Sexual Imagery, Sex & Gender</p>
Starting point	Love of the music and nostalgia for the 1960's
Structure	27mins - EPISODIC 8 sections
Dancers	10 dancers (5M 5F)
Accompaniment	<p>Songs recorded by The Rolling Stones Pre-recorded popular music:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Little Red Rooster2. Lady Jane3. Not Fade Away4. As Tears Go By5. Paint it Black6. Ruby Tuesday7. Play with Fire8. Sympathy for the Devil
Costume	Marian Bruce
Lighting	Tina MacHugh
Set	Black box, black cyclorama.

THE SUBJECT MATTER (THEME/TOPIC) OF THE DANCE

Rooster is an evocation of the mid 1960's using music, dance, gesture and costume to create the feeling of a Saturday night out. It examines the relationship between men and women from the assumption that the men have an innate advantage, although there are points in the work where the women triumph. Each song section segues into the following section gradually building to a climax performed by the full company.

I'm-a gonna tell ya how it's gonna be! The rock 'n' roll swagger of the Rolling Stones comes thrillingly to life in **Rooster**, Christopher Bruce's electrifying celebration of the swinging sixties. Sharp-suited, snake-hipped men and strong, sassy women perform virtuoso courtship dances to some of the Stones' most famous tunes, including **Not Fade Away, Paint It Black, Sympathy for the Devil** and **Little Red Rooster**.

"It's a celebration of the music, and therefore it reflects the qualities of the songs including, I have to say, the rather dreadful attitude towards women that it was natural for young men to have in my teenage years. That's why I made the comparison between the strutting cockerel with his fine feathers and the man dressed up to go out – you know the blue suede shoes kind of image. Things have changed for some of us – not enough, perhaps – over the past 20-30 years, but it reflects the time. I'm not condoning the attitude, just accepting that it was an attitude of the time. And the women for their part are rather lobb-suffering, but see through it all with a kind of philosophical humour, so there's a kind of sexual war going on."

By Christopher Bruce 1993

A joyous, witty piece requiring dancers with 'rubber legs and elastic bodies' to represent the familiar cocky strutting of the early Mick Jagger."

By Sally Whyte 1992

What Fokine did for the swan and Ashton for white doves, Bruce does for the barnyard rooster, but not in terms of the classical vocabulary so much as being breathtakingly innovative in jazz/disco/Contemporary techniques. His 10 dancers strut, tanatlise and switch moods as the songs change, but the dance dominates throughout."

By Nicholas Dromgoole 1992

Bruce's dances are shown to be anthropomorphic, with sexual suggestiveness cast in the guise of animal behaviour, and making mockery of courtship ritual. There is a kind of flung looseness to the dancing and there is an over-riding sense of mating potential being tested."

By Ann Nugent 1992

ARTICLE

Choreographer Christopher Bruce created Rooster in 1991, and Rambert first performed it in 1994. Put simply, it looked fabulous then – and, in Rambert’s all-pistons-pumping revival, it looks if anything even better now.

Belting along to eight of the [Rolling Stones](#) finest and best-known songs, this piece for five men and five women sets out to be at once a celebration of the era in which the tracks were created and also a sly dig at the inherent male-chauvinism of the lyrics of this (let’s face it) not overly PC band.

Sometimes, it closely follows those lyrics – an admonishing wagged finger at the words “...cause you’re playing with fire”; a bow of sympathetically devilish false humility at “Pleased to meet you!” Yet more often, it abstractly distills the spirit of the songs, with the boys strutting and preening like unfeasibly toned cockerels but – fear not – their lissome intended playthings often having the last laugh.

What this only barely hints at, however, is how exhilaratingly entertaining Rooster is. This is exactly the sort of sexy, bright-eyed, technically punishing piece that Rambert’s dancers should be dancing, and their enthusiasm for it effervesces across the fourth wall.

You can tell that Bruce knows these songs inside out, and the detail with which he physically represents a guitar lick here, a percussion stab there – and the crisp athleticism with which the troupe responds – is a genuine joy to watch. Who knew that the Stones made such fantastic dance music?

OVERVIEW

<p>STYLE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Contemporary ● Ballet ● Courtly dances ● Tap ● Lyrical 	<p>ACTIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Animal ● Pedestrian ● Gestural ● Isolated ● Connected 	<p>DYNAMIC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Jerky gestures ● Fluid whole body ● Exciting ● Contrasting 	<p>SPACE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Personal ● General ● Circular ● Direct ● Group shapes
<p>SOUND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recorded sound ● Rolling Stones ● Lyrical ● Toe tapping ● Clapping 	<p>COSTUME</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Gender specific ● Velvet jackets, shirt, tie ● Flirty skirt, black & red ● Jazz shoes ● Feather boa ● Colour - wild 	<p>LIGHTING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Purple foot light ● Mood ● Follow spot ● General wash 	<p>SET</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Proscenium arch ● Black cyclorama ● No staging – why? ● E&E
<p>STRUCTURE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Episodic ● Rondo response to musics ● Lyrical ● Repeated phrases ● End finale is a collage of all prior sections 	<p>DANCERS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 10 dancers ● 5M ● 5F ● Solo ● Duets ● Group 	<p>RELATIONSHIPS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sex, drugs and R&R ● Intimate ● Flirty ● Anger ● Abuse ● Contact (slap!) ● Gender ● With each other ● With audience 	<p>CAMERA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Panning ● Close up ● Zoom ● Wide image

BRUCE'S CHOREOGRAPHIC PROCESS FOR ROOSTER

STIMULUS OR STARTING POINT

Love of the music and nostalgia for the 1960's



RESEARCH

Personal



IMPROVISATION AND EXPERIMENTATION

Gestures, animalistic



SELECTION OF MOVEMENT MATERIAL AND THE CREATION OF MOTIFS

Stylised, allows characters to be introduced



THE APPLICATION OF CHOREOGRAPHIC DEVICES

(MOTIF DEVELOPMENT, THE USE OF VARIATION, CONTRAST, TRANSITIONS ETC.)

Use of repetition within the final piece



STRUCTURE AND FORM

The use of an episodic narrative structure

The use of the Rolling Stones songs to influence climaxes, phrasing, timing etc.



REHEARSAL & REFINING

Pre tour, further refinements when returns to stage



EVALUATION

Bruce continually reflects on his work, making revisions through cast changes and new productions being created

THE FORM – STRUCTURE

1. LITTLE RED ROOSTER

2. LADY JANE

3. NOT FADE AWAY

4. AS TEARS GO BY

5. PAINT IT BLACK

6. RUBY TUESDAY

7. PLAY WITH FIRE

8. SYMPATHY FOR THE DEVIL

SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1

LITTLE RED ROOSTER

By Willie Dixon

6 dancers : 5 male, 1 female (the full company comes on stage at the end) Running time 2'55"

The title and lyrics set a farmyard scene. The male dancers use movements that are characteristic of a rooster and human. These movements include strutting, call, preening, head movements, arm, leg and hip movements. These movements are repeated and abstracted throughout other sessions to create unity.

The dance opens with the five men stationary on stage. The man downstage right comes to life and moves into the spotlight with the start of the music. His initial dance phrase is the 'Rooster strut'. Turning to face the audience he appears to sleek down his hair and adjust his tie. On the first appearance of the words 'dogs begin to bark' the dancer introduces the wing flapping chicken jump; then on the repeat of these words he acts like a dog, putting his hands up as though they were paws, a dog begging, eager to please, and then he rolls over onto his back, limbs in the air. He leaves stage right as a woman enters upstage and approaches the two men at the back who one by one reject her.

There are obvious parallels between the behaviour of the birds and humans. Some male birds are brightly coloured and go through mating rituals to attract the female. Human behaviour also has its dating and mating routines. He is aiming to be noticed, break away from other males and attract the females. As the female enters she has a strong presence. There is a focus on appearance and consciousness. This behaviour is evident at parties and clubs or other events where males and females congregate. Bruce capitalises on this behaviour in this dance and explores a range of M & F relationships. What is significant about the male costumes?

There are a number of contradictions if we stick to a literal farmyard interpretation. All is not right in the farmyard. The lyrics state "..... rooster too lazy to crow" ".... In the farmyard upset in every way" Because the little red rooster is gone. Visually, things are not right either, Bruce's farmyard is male dominated and the female approaches the male. What other interpretations are there? What about feminism and female liberation in the 1960's when women were becoming more assertive? What movements reinforce this interpretation?

The set has no visual cues. We only see the dancers in a pool of light surrounded by darkness. Does the space represent a farmyard, a club, the community or someplace else?

At the end of the section the full company comes onto the stage, walking in very deliberate paths either parallel to or at right angles to the front of the stage so that the work ends with eight dancers lined up at the back with one couple downstage in the centre.

SECTION 2

LADY



JANE

Full company – 10 dancers. Running time 3'5".

This piece is a trip back in history to the era of courtly dance. After LRR, this is nostalgic of what life was like. Behaviour of males and females was predefined, prim and proper. How do movements reflect this? –

The piece gives the initial illusion of a courtly dance with attention focused on the central couple. Courtly duets, ritual of courtship and a feeling of attraction are seen. The male is attempting to seduce the female. Feelings of nervousness and appreciation are evident, at the same time playful and sensitive.

The orderly formations, the exaggerated bowing give us clues – curtsies, kneeling, balletic influences, flowing gestures help to create the feel of gallantry. The music and the movements create that emotion. However the lyrics unfold a darker, steamier side to life – lovers and mistresses. Consider this, the male pledges himself to Lady Jane; he has to give up Lady Anne and Corine. Does he love Lady Jane or is he doing what is expected?

The central man and his partner 'Lady Jane' perform the minuet-style steps and bow to one another. As the words of the song proclaim the man to be 'Jane's' servant he provides his knee for her to sit on. Her gestures and way of moving with her arms crossed over her body suggest a modest demeanour. As the song progresses to the second verse a more pushy woman 'Lady Ann' takes 'Jane's' place and the couples on the fringe realign, but 'Jane' returns for the musical interlude. This ends with the couple reclining facing one another. 'Jane' is lifted away and 'Sweet Marie' takes her place; but at the end of the final verse, as the dancers link hands in a circle, the man again turns to 'Jane', whom he lifts into the centre of the group, her hands raised ready to give the introductory claps for the next number.

Although the full company is on stage, for much of the time the other four couples shuffle in a more contemporary social dance at the back or side of the stage from which some of them emerge briefly. Only at the end of the dance, when they come together in a circle, do they all fully participate in the dance rather than provide an animated background.



SECTION 3

NOT FADE AWAY

By Petty and Hardin (1957)

Originally recorded by Buddy Holly and the Crickets, cover version by the Stones in Bo Diddley style.
2 dancers : 1 male and 1 female. Running time 1'48".

This piece takes a leap from the courtly era to the jive era of the early 20th century. It is an exuberant and lively dance with more free and unrestrained movement travelling over the stage space with dominant circular patterns, advancing and retreating. This piece is a total contrast to Lady Jane.

There is a male/female divide across the dance space. Suggesting leader and friends. The dancers fight for attention. Their actions are bold, sharp and they are trying to impress.

The male declares his love and states his expectations of her. We have a return of the strutting male movements introduced in LRR but are subtler and focus on abstracted wing flapping which was typical of popular dance in the jive era. There are also traces of abstracted courtly dance movements that links to the previous piece. The two separate and love fades away in contrast to the male expectations.

The group disperse, walking backwards off the stage leaving only one couple. Their duet is based on social dancing but the girl expends only a minimum of energy while the man shows off. At the end he departs with three other men while the girl, upstage left, traces a vertical wave of air with her hand as she crouches down and in the diminishing light fades away.



SECTION 4

AS TEARS GO BY

By Mick Jagger, Keith Richards and Andrew Oldham

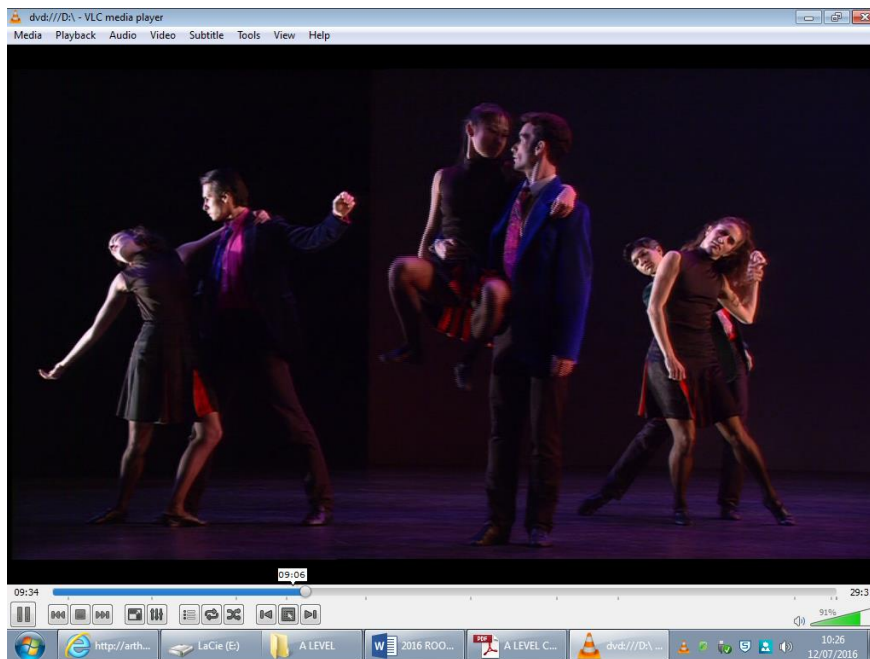
8 dancers : 4 male and 4 female. Running time 2'45".

In LRR we had the farmyard as a metaphor, now we focus on the schoolyard as the lyrics reflect on actions of children and how these actions relate to life in general. The issues revolve around exclusion and isolation. The circular formations used by the male and female groups show how they can isolate an individual. The reason for exclusion can be many and varied as we go through life. We also see movements that link us back to Lady Jane – those of expected behaviour – the boys do boy things together and the girls do their thing. Sometimes they come together but peer pressure changes their behaviour. The two isolated characters seek solace in each other, or did the female engineer the whole event? What are the clues? Who else can you see in the piece? Are there any parental figures? Other issues?

There is a suggestion of influence over the group, leader dominance, friends falling out, tensions and jealousy. The actions create a sense of conversation. Typical male/female actions – skipping, light on feet.

One man (who appears to be primarily an observer, watching and walking naturally through the action) and one woman stand outside a group of friends who clearly want nothing to do with them. The other three men and three women make two gender cliques and occasionally form cross group partnerships. The women seem intrigued by the outsider man but neither clique is interested in the isolated woman. There is a telling moment when the three women link outstretched arms as if going into a folk dance, typical of Bruce's choreography in the 1980s. The outsider woman joins the end of the line, but the others stare at

her and she drops away giving a visual image of an individual rejected by the community. There is a child-like quality to the isolated woman's skips, turns and little runs, and selfishness to her behaviour. The outsider man periodically goes to her support but gets his face slapped for his pains. At the end of the song she is left crouching centre-stage and attracts his attention by waving her arm. He pulls her up and carries her off over his shoulder.



SECTION 5

PAINT IT BLACK

By Mick Jagger and Keith Richards

4 dancers : 1 male and 3 female. Running time 3'10".

This is an energetic solo for a man, supported by a female backing group moving in unison with a provocative dance routine that resembles those for the former television dance group Pan's People. The women's dance routine is repeated with the repetition of the words. The tall, long haired women of Geneva Ballet look like Amazons in this section, but to achieve the same effect with later casts Bruce made the dancers more aggressive - instead of just waving their red scarves triumphantly as they exit, they now also use them to whip their male victim.

This piece appears to take us to the tragic side of relationships – the feelings of despair and torment. Paint in Black can be seen as an attempt to obliterate something from the mind. Consider the movements – the male character in some form of turmoil. Do the lyrics imply that he has lost his lover, does the line of black cars imply a funeral procession?

What is the relationship of the females to the male? What type of movements do the girls portray? What type of movements is the male executing and what feeling are they portraying? Do they relate back to the previous pieces? What other possible symbolism do you see in this piece (drugs, madness, suicide or crucifixion)?



SECTION 6

RUBY TUESDAY

By Mick Jagger and Keith Richards

5 dancers : initially a solo for a woman later joined by 4 men. Running time 3'10".

Just as 'Paint It Black' is primarily a solo for a man, this is a solo for a woman although towards the end she is joined on stage by four men who similarly perform simple dance routines in unison or pairs giving the impression of the conventional movements of a standard vocal backing group. The choreography for the woman is very typical of Bruce's style with a low centre of gravity and flowing movement. There is an emphasis on yearning arabesques and off-balance, turning movements which propel the dance along. The wearing of red hints at passion. During the dance the soloist fiddles with her hair, picks something from the ground faintly echoing gestures from the mad scene in *Giselle* and twists her arms and hands with the suggestion of underlying tension. Towards the end of the dance the soloist throws herself into the men's arms and they manipulate her in more twists and turns developing the material she previously performed on her own.

The central character, Ruby Tuesday, is an enigma. She appears in a long red dress, no shoes, hair flowing freely. She could be a child of the 1960's – a hippy. Her movements in the first half of the dance consists of runs, leaps, turns, travelling across the stage using straight and circular patterns. The feeling is one of freedom.

The mood suddenly changes mid-way when the males enter dressed in black. Who or what do the males represent? Her dancing changes. What is this transition?

- Are the males undertakers – is she dead?

- Has she gone insane?
- Was she insane and returned to sanity?
- Did she cease her hippy ways and return to society?

Bruce leaves the interpretation to us.



SECTION 7

PLAY WITH FIRE

By Mick Jagger and Keith Richards

2 dancers : 1 male and 1 female. Running time 2' 10".

In some respects, like the 'Not Fade Away' duet, this section draws on social dance and social class, giving the male dancer the more flamboyant steps. The introduction of the red feather boa as a prop and a more varied use of popular dance forms provides a contrast to the earlier duet and is used by the female to attract attention and could allure to a more rich, successful, dangerous female.

Movements are predominantly pedestrian and upright with a lot of walking and some turns and jumps with the male leading in most cases. These movements are punctuated in a number of ways;

1. With stillness of the girl while the male continues with a range of movements and gestures, which include strutting, head pulses, arm movements, knee knocking and adjusting the tie.
2. The M and F come together and with open and closed movements, turns and leg extensions.
3. Confrontation by teasing or toying with each other.

There are a number of hip initiated movements from contained to open.

The M movements are quite percussive, strong, in particular the gestures, these include fast and sudden actions. The F movements match that of the M when they are dancing together alternating, matching and in unison.

The dance has a wide dynamic range with moments of stillness through to strong rapid and direct movements.

The dance uses shapes that are straight, angular and mixed with curves.

The performance area is a pool of light on a stage that is predominantly black, black backdrop, black floor and sides. Therefore the interaction between the two dancers is the only source for determining the spatial relationships.

The F enters from the R and then stops. The M enters from the L and stops. They see each other and the interaction begins, initiated by the M. The direction of movement is mainly side to side or on a diagonal using both straight and curved pathways. The movements then form circular patterns when they dance together. They never stay far from each other. When the male moves away from her she tends to follow or tries to hold him back using a prop.

As they dance they connect and part, sometimes they pass each other, he leads and she follows, and when they connect they go around each other. They are however always contained within the pool of light surrounded by darkness.





The dance explores the courting relationship and antics between a M and a F.

The F enters slowly, wearing a black dress and red boa. She watched the M enter. He then goes through a typical male action of attracting attention. The routine is abstracted from the actions of a rooster, typical strutting, preening, head forwards, cocky, macho movements to the music.

“..... Well you’ve got your diamonds, and you’ve got your pretty clothes, and your chauffer drives your car, you let everybody know.....”

These lyrics, the red boa, and the way the F walks on give an immediate impression that she is upper class. Her initial ambivalence (stillness, posture) gives way to mirroring his hip rotation, turning movements. Is she mocking him? Or playing?

He gives her a warning through strong punctuated arm movements and gestures to the lyrics “..... don’t play with me ’cos you play with fire.....” He turns and walks away from her repeating his earlier cocky movements. He then turns past her with an abstracted elevated run and then drops to mid-level. He appears not to be interested or is he playing hard to get in this mating game? She ignores his warning and as he dances past she uses the boa to lasso him. He escapes and she tries to catch him again and again as they dance around. Is she attracted to him more because he shows little interest?

He gives her a second warning, repeating the movements of the first. The lyrics repeat “..... don’t play with me ’cos you play with fire.....”. He turns and walks away from her and again repeating his earlier cocky movements. She ignores his warning and follows him and copies his earlier elevated run then executes a series of turns while travelling towards him and ending in a sexy hip gyration aided by the boa. This attracts his attention. She now uses the red boa like a matador’s cape to attract the bull. It works.

The dance to this point has been dominated by the male dancing. It has been a mating game. The two have been more apart than together. He has been leading and she has been following and sometimes copying movements.

Has he now been mesmerised by her antics? He now approaches her and they dance in close contact with each other as a couple, jiving, turning, dancing side by side with some abstracted movements which appear to be the opposite of the forward head pulses.

As the lyrics repeats: “... Don’t play with me, cos you play with fire” There is no evidence of the male’s earlier cocky movements, no strutting, no preening, no forward head pulses, no arm gestures. Is this now her warning that he is playing with fire? They continue to dance abstracted courtly movements. Gradually they begin to separate, he takes the boa and mocks her earlier sexy hip gyration and throws the boa back at her. The spell is broken. His cocky, strutting, preening, head pulsing movements return as the lyrics repeat: “... Don’t play with me, cos you play with fire” He continues with his strong punctuated arm movements and gestures at her. She hits his pointed finger and leaves in a huff, he remains pondering. Both have played with fire, both have been burned, both have lost.

SECTION 8

SYMPATHY FOR THE DEVIL

BY MICK JAGGER AND KEITH RICHARDS

Full company 10 dancers. Running time 7’ 20”.

This is a fast and energetic dance with repeated entrances and exits for all the company although the focus is on the man who begins the number. It features elaborate bows of introduction and the placing of forefingers immediately above the head (to represent the horns of the Devil). Dancers enter and exit picking up movement material from one another, performing in unison both paralleling and reflecting one another’s gestures. There is a feeling of confrontation and claiming the girl.

Just as the words ‘Pleased to meet you’ are illustrated by courteous bows so, for example, the words ‘made damn sure that Pilate washes his hands and sealed His fate’ are depicted by a solo dancer ‘washing’ his hands round one another.

The final section of this dance is a quick reprise of all eight preceding numbers. Inevitably it opens with the Rooster strut followed by a girl lifted by the two men at the end of ‘Little Red Rooster’. The dancers then perform in quick succession the minuet-style movement from ‘Lady Jane’; duet material from ‘Not Fade Away’; the face-slap from ‘As Tears Go By’; the male soloist’s encounter with the women from ‘Paint It Black’; the woman’s leap into the four men’s arms from ‘Ruby Tuesday’; and duet material from ‘Play With Fire’. Finally, after a reprise of the elaborate introductions by the devil, the soloist of the first piece goes into the ‘Rooster strut’ and, as he adjusts his tie yet again, the lights go out.



THE CONSTITUENT FEATURES OF THE DANCE & THEIR RELEVANCE IN EMBODYING THE SUBJECT MATTER

- **MOVEMENT COMPONENTS**
- **DANCERS**

- **PHYSICAL SETTING**
- **COSTUME (& PROPS)**
- **AURAL SETTING**

THE MOVEMENT

The dance is constructed of eight distinct numbers, each performed to a separate song. As with some of Christopher Bruce's other works these could easily stand alone, but as a sequence they build up the atmosphere and feel of the 'swinging' 1960s and contemporary attitudes. The men perform the most energetic choreography, deliberately showing off, but several sections, notably 'Not Fade Away', 'Paint It Black', 'Play with Fire' and the revised version of 'As Tears Go By' end with the men being put down by the women. Although each song provides the focus for a distinctive theme or mood they are sometimes linked – the end of one dance leads seamlessly into the next.

There are a number of movement motifs that recur throughout *Rooster* including the ballet's most idiosyncratic step that may be called the 'Rooster strut' (see front cover), a stylised walk for the men in which the toes of one foot slide along the floor, the head and neck jut forward, and the rest of the dancer's body is pulled towards the outstretched extremities. The walk self-evidently mimics the way in which cockerels move. The male dancers also repeatedly perform grooming gestures, slicking down their hair; straightening their cuffs and sleeves; and, most frequently, adjusting their ties (as seen in the photograph on this page). At times they do so while performing the 'Rooster strut'. There are also several



characteristic jumps for the male dancers one of which suggests a chicken trying to fly with his stubby wings. The dancer holds onto the bottom of his jacket lapels so that his arms are bent into the triangular shape of a chicken's compact wing. He lifts his elbows as he jumps so that they appear to flap as he makes fluttering or 'bicycling' gestures with his feet.

Throughout the work everyday gestures, such as the handshake in 'Sympathy For The Devil', develop into interesting movements. There is repeated use of the floor on which dancers of both sexes roll and turn. Also repeated in several sections are the extravagant courtly gestures suggestive of the steps of a minuet with its bows and flourishes (see photograph on page 5).

PHYSICAL SETTING

Rooster is set on an undecorated stage in which areas are picked in light. Initially the centre of the stage is illuminated and it is into this pool of light that the first dancer walks performing the 'Rooster strut'.

Sometimes the light fills the stage and at other times just picks out an individual performer (or detail such as the hand fading away at the end of the third song).

'Sympathy for The Devil' has the most complex and obviously changing light plot.

Bruce rarely has elaborate settings for his works, aware that dancers need plenty of space in which to perform.

COSTUME (& PROPS)

For the most part the costumes reflect rather than literally reproduce 1960s dress, though the men's velvet jackets, colourful shirts and co-ordinated ties – all suggesting Jagger's 'dandy' phase – were initially original 1960s garments bought from second-hand shops. The men's trousers were specially made in strong stretch fabric to give the impression of jeans. Their jackets are maroon, brown, black, green and blue although all four men in 'Ruby Tuesday' wear black jackets for that number. Their appearance is varied further when they discard their jackets for 'Paint It Black' and 'Sympathy For The Devil'. The costumes are completed by black jazz shoes.

While there is individuality and variation in the colourful costumes for the men, the women's are identical. They wear simple, chic dresses, with a black and red colour-scheme throughout. Initially they wear sleeveless black dresses, the skirts of which fall to just above the knee and have box-pleats with red inserts. For 'Paint It Black' and 'Play With Fire' the women are in sleeveless black mini-shifts evoking Mary Quant's 60s fashions. For 'Paint It Black' the trio's costumes are completed by red neck-scarves, and for 'Play With Fire' the woman also has a red feather boa which is used as much as a prop as a part of the costume. (For some productions the woman in this number wears the 'dress' with red pleats rather than the mini-shift, as in the photo on this page) To give 'Ruby Tuesday' a hippie look the solo woman wears a long, full skirted red dress with long sleeves although originally in Geneva she wore a long, straight, black dress with thigh-high split. All the women wear sheer black tights and black jazz shoes.

Red feather boa could be used to suggest the shift of power between men & women and link to the suggested behaviours of the different sexes.

Colour

The use of colours red and black to evoke mood, feeling and meaning and to symbolise ideas, for example the positive attributes of life, love, passion, warmth and power, and the negative attributes of anger, hatred, death and destruction.



AURAL SETTING

Rooster is performed to music recorded by the Rolling Stones between 1964 and 1969. The eight pieces selected are well known and provided a fertile source of ideas.

- Bruce uses the words mimetically in the movement to communicate intention e.g the head pulse that accompanies 'I am the little red rooster' and the repeated arm-hand gesture to 'Don't' play with me cos' you play with fire' in the track Play with Fire.
- Bruce uses emotional connotations of the instrumentation that accompany the harpsicord, flute and the pulsing drums e.g the courtly elegance of the floor patterns and bows that accompany the harpsicord.

THE ROLLING STONES

Two tracks are rhythm and blues standards, the other six are by Mick Jagger and Keith Richards. It was not until the mid-sixties that the Stones concentrated on recording their own, original material. The Rolling Stones date their founding from July 12 1962 when a six-man group including Jagger, Richards and Brian Jones (then calling himself Elmo Lewis) performed at the Marquee Club in London's West End. Although Jagger and Richards had known one another at Wentworth Junior County Primary School, their paths had diverged until a chance reunion on a train led them to reveal a shared passion for rhythm and blues. Indeed all three men were highly enthusiastic devotees of this tradition of black American music and it was by promoting it as popular form that they established their own status among the principal architects of British rock music.

The group went through a number of permutations – Bill Wyman joined in December 1962 and Charlie Watts officially from January 1963 – and they became increasingly popular playing clubs and venues in and around London, including the Crawdaddy Club at Richmond. Their repertory at this time was largely inspired by Chuck Berry, Bo Diddley and Jimmy Reed. In May 1963 the Stones signed a management contract with Andrew Oldham; Oldham finally fixed the line-up of five, added a 'g' to their earlier name of the Rollin' Stones, and arranged a three-year recording contract with impact who in turn signed a release agreement with Decca. In June 1963 the group released their first single, *Come On* and *I Wanna Be Loved*.

In spite of Oldham's attempts to mould the group so that they performed in Mod velvet collared jackets and matching ties, he could not disguise their sullen performing style, a rebellious and uncouth image that affronted conservative opinion and contrasted with the more wholesome package offered by the Beatles. The Stones aroused further controversy by their risqué, aggressive, and sometimes misogynistic lyrics.

THE CHOREOGRAPHIC APPROACH (TECHNIQUE, MOVEMENT STYLE AND CHOREOGRAPHIC STYLE) OF THE CHOREOGRAPHER

DANCE STYLES USED IN ROOSTER: CONTEMPORARY, ROCK N ROLL, BALLET

Social Dance

The arrival of the twist in 1961 heralded a behavioural shift of the dance craze inspired by the lindy hop, jitterbug, jive and rock n roll. No more female wallflowers waiting for Mr Right to nervously practice his well-rehearsed request for a dance. No more dance cards at formal balls where hair gelled hopefuls could write their name next to a set dance. If you had set out to design a dance that would predict and exactly complement the surge in women's freedom and self-determination, then you could have done no better than this exciting solo pivoting, that soon became the license to dance whatever you wished.

Courtly Dance

A sense of graciousness pervades much of Rooster, drawn from the characterisation of the dance styles of European courts if the late 1500's to the early 1700's. The Rolling Stones, Beatles and other pop groups had experimented with wearing the long, flowing velvet gowns derived from courtly dance, and a studied sartorial elegance was one of the hallmarks of the sixties fashions.

CHOREOGRAPHIC STYLE

A number of movement motifs recur throughout the work including;

- the 'rooster strut', a stylised upright(S) walk (A) that the men execute by sliding the toes of the foot along the floor (A) while the head and neck jut (D) forward allowing the body to be pulled toward the outstretched extremities.
- the male dancers perform repeated grooming gestures (A), slicking down their hair, straightening cuffs and sleeves and adjusting ties and execute a high level jump (S) whilst holding jacket lapels, arms bent in a flapping (D) triangle and legs paddling underneath, suggesting the truncated flight of a chicken.
- quotidian gestures (A) such as the handshake are extended into larger movements with rolls and turns (A) on the floor (S) for male and female dancers and suggestions of the exaggerated bows and flourish of the minuet.

CHICKENS

It is obvious from the title that hens, rooster and their habits have provided Bruce with a wealth of movement material with which to experiment. It is also interesting to note that there were several dances with farmyard allusions that accompanied the slave traders enforced migration of black Africans preceding the 1920's musical and the Twist (1961) e.g The Turkey Trot, The Chicken Flutter, The Pigeon Wing and The Buzzard (Emery 1988).

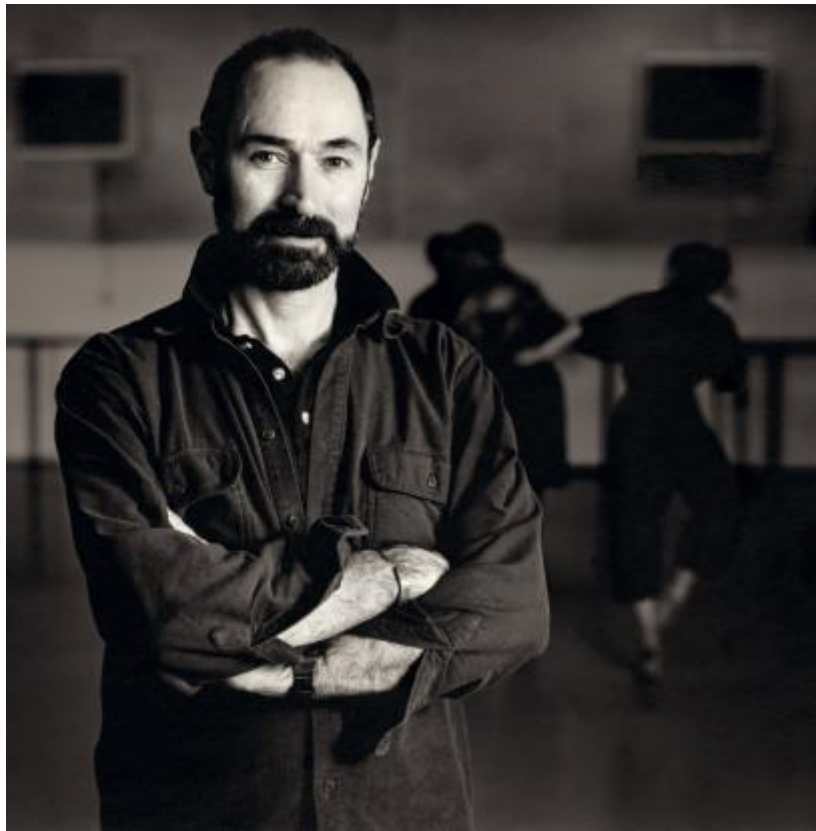
THE PARTY

This could also be labelled 'Boy meets Girl' or 'The Night Club' or 'The Mating Game'. It refers to the main movement source if Rooster, namely the dance and accompanying behaviours of males and females when they met in sixties clubs, pubs and at parties.

INFLUENCES AFFECTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHOREOGRAPHER

- Graham technique
- Walter Gore and Marie Rambert – narrative and character dance
- Glen Tetley – choreographic language is the syntheses elements of classical and contemporary
- Norman Morrice – moved Bruce away from specific dramas to universal themes
- Anna Sokolow (an American guest choreographer in 1967-1970) – produced socially aware drama and productions to popular music
- Marie Rambert who instilled high standards in Bruce and emphasised the need for theatricality

WHO IS CHRISTOPHER BRUCE?



“Bruce agrees that, on the evidence of *Ghost Dances*, *Swansong* and *Cruel Garden* (about the death of Lorca at the hands of the Fascists in Spain), human rights themes have provided him

with a strong source of inspiration. He remains a passionate advocate for the role of dance and the arts in society and believes that seeing good work and the chance to perform, either as an amateur or a professional, can not only enrich lives, but can also be a civilising influence”.

CONTEXT

- Christopher Bruce (born in 1945) – Leading choreographer

TRAINING AND BRUCE AS A DANCER

- Trained at Benson Stage Academy, Scarborough, included ballet, tap, acrobatics
- Started dancing at 11, was introduced to dance by his father. At 13 he attended Ballet Rambert School.
- After a brief spell with Walter Gore’s London Ballet, he joined Ballet Rambert in 1963 when it was ‘classical’. In 1966 Rambert reformed and embraced a more contemporary influence while under Norman Norrice.
- He was the last to be ‘nurtured’ by the founder of RDC - Marie Rambert.

BRUCE AS A CHOREOGRAPHER

- First choreography – 1969 ‘George Frideric’. He became the first home-grown dance choreographer.
- 1975-1987 – Associate Director of Rambert until 1979 and then he became Associate Choreographer
- 1987-1994 – Freelance Career and was also associated with the Houston Ballet from 1989 & Associate Choreographer for English National Ballet
- 1994 – Returned to RDC
- Sought after artist
- He has choreographed for operas and theatrical productions (Josef and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat)

THEMES

- His ballets are essentially about ideas
- May not have an obvious storyline
- Episodic, sometimes with parallel layers of narrative
- Dramatic and emotive
- Imagery
- Open to interpretation - Bruce prefers an audience to keep an open mind about his works, often avoiding programme notes and specific statements. However he does recognise that his pieces are concerned with ideas rather than abstract dance and there is usually strong imagery.
- Develops from an external stimulus
- Selects themes
- Biographies & autobiographical
- Cruel Garden (1977) was his first collaboration – mime artist and composer. LANDMARK piece.
- Some of his works have autobiographical elements such as:
 - Weekend (1974) looks at the stress place on marriage by constant touring.
 - Rooster (1991) is about the lifestyle he remembers from the 1960's.
 - Ancient Voices of Children (1975) reflects the love of his family and children.
 - Four Scenes (1998) looks at his role as a grandfather.
- Others are based on the biographies and works of other people e.g:
 - Cruel Garden (1977) on the poet and playwright Federico Garcia Lorca
 - The Dream is Over (1986) on the singer John Lennon
 - Journey (1990) on the dancer Erik Bruhn.
- Several of Bruce's works express political, social and ecological awareness.
 - WAR e.g For these who die for cattle (1972)

- POLITICAL OPPRESSION Land (1985)
e.g Ghost Dances (1981)
Silence is the end of our Song (1983)
- NATURE e.g Nature Dances (1992)
Stream (1996)

- His dances generally develop from a stimulus such as music, painting or literature, but he selects themes which can be conveyed through dance and drawing from abstracting his subject, rather than making direct reference to the original.
- They may not have an obvious storyline, but they are episodic, sometimes narrative, generally dramatic or emotive structures.

DESIGN

- Design is often simple
- Music choice is eclectic, a suite of songs, cyclical structures.
- The design is an extremely important contributing factor, but Bruce is concerned that any stage setting does not intrude in to the dance area and that costumes allow for freedom of movement. He works closely with designers sometimes creates his own designs, as he did for Swansong and Ghost Dances. Lighting is always a significant element in the design for his works.
- Bruce chooses a wide range of music, from
 - popular songs (Rooster, to songs by the Rolling Stones),
 - world music (Ghost dances, to South American music)
 - classical music (Symphony in Three Movements, 1989, to Stravinsky,
 - contemporary music (Meeting Point 1995 to Michael Nyman and Four Scenes 1998
 - specially commissioned scores (Stream by Phillip Chambon)
- The dance often closely responds to the music. That said he believes dance should be independent of music. He often adds a musical score near to choreographic completion.

CHOREOGRAPHIC STYLE

- Lyrical and fluid
- Flexed feet
- Bruce uses a blend of techniques, notably ballet and contemporary. He uses long extended lines of ballet but with off balance tilts and attitudes. Balletic movements such as arabesques, attitudes and jetes combine with a low centre of gravity, a spiralling torso, and use of the off balance from contemporary dance. He makes use of weight and the floor in deep plies and lunges.
- His own contemporary training was in Martha Graham technique and strong use of the back and a low centre of gravity are important elements in his choreography.
- In addition he will use another style;
 - folk (SEARGENT EARLY'S DREAM, QUICKSILVER & GHOST DANCES)
 - tap (SWANSONG)
 - flamenco (CRUEL GARDEN)
 - gestural (ROOSTER head pecks and struts & FOUR SCENES hop scotch)He aims to give an essence of styles rather than reproduce them authentically.
- He sometimes uses recognisable 'everyday' movements, such as gesture incorporated into the choreography.
- His work has a clear thematic base, even if they are non-narrative. He frequently demonstrates a strong sense of character e.g R, S CG.
- His use of phrasing and dynamics are distinct. He uses stillness in contrast with fluid action, like a sentence full of commas and ending with a full stop.
- His phrasing gives his choreography a strong dynamic quality, with a distinct starting point, progression and finish. He also uses simplicity and stillness juxtaposed with intricate footwork and fast paced action.
- Motif repetition and accumulation are widely used.

- He enjoys revisiting previous scenes as a way of instilling an idea into the audience e.g ROOSTER (1991) & SWANSONG (1987)
- Uses symbolic repetition to shape the structure of many of his works, images to open and close e.g GHOST DANCES (1981) & SEARGENT EARLY'S DREAM (1984)
- He likes his dancers to have their own interpretation of a theme or dance, and to have a strong sense of musicality and characterization e.g SWANSONG (1987) & MOONSHINE (1993)

THE ORIGINS OF THE DANCE

I was listening to some Rolling Stones' tracks when I suddenly found myself wondering if I could use them to make a dance piece. When I finally came to choreograph Rooster, nearly two years later, I had to be very careful to avoid falling into a trap. The music was so well so known and I had to make sure that the dance itself was strong enough and the overall structure sound. There had to be a link between the eight tracks and themes that carried through. The whole had to add up to more than the individual parts. I looked for a choreographic language that was individual to the piece, but I try to do that with every dance I make.

Rooster is a celebratory work in that it celebrates the sixties and, of course, my youth. Some of the tracks, such as Ruby Tuesday or As Tears Go By, are more reflective but even in these sections I have tried to find humour and a sense of fun. One of the main themes I explore is the male chauvinism that comes through in the lyrics of some of the tracks and it is also interesting to see these behavioural patterns beginning in the playground where children can be so cruel to each other.

What I love about dance as an art form is that it doesn't use words to nail down exactly what the piece is about. For me, dance is a collage of ideas which the audience can read on several levels. Every time they come to a performance they see something completely different, depending on their mood, and the performance on that particular occasion. Every viewing should be able to take you to another place.

With my works I always like to transport people to another world; to engage them. If I can succeed in this, I feel the process has been worthwhile.

It's been great to return to it. The piece is basically the same wherever I stage it, but I'm always affected by the dancers I work with, therefore the way one dancer performs a role will always be slightly different to another dancing the same part.

The dancers seem to really enjoy dancing it – but the piece is much harder than it looks. On stage it appears as if they are just having a lot of fun but the discipline that is required is exacting. I always say to the dancers that the choreography has to be as accurate as a Balanchine ballet.

The positive thing about Rooster is that it doesn't seem to date. Like the Rolling Stones' music, it seems to affect and engage a whole range of generations from youngsters to 80-year-olds, which is wonderful. I think the themes in the piece are universal even if I am treating them quite lightly. The piece is an ironic look at

the sixties and the attitudes of the times. The chauvinism may have declined a little in the West, but, the world over, attitudes haven't always changed that much, I have to say!

MAKING ROOSTER

Behind the scenes as Rambert rehearses **Rooster**, the iconic dance to the music of the Rolling Stones. Dancers from Britain's national dance company talk about the fun, creativity and hard work that go into bringing the Stones' rock 'n' roll swagger - and Christopher Bruce's challenging choreography - to the stage.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE DANCE AND ITS CONTEXT

What does this really mean?

When studying the set work for A-level Dance it is necessary for the students to gain knowledge and understanding of how the dance work relates to its context. For example, when studying 'Rooster', consideration of its connection to the area of study (Rambert Dance Company 1966-2002) and to other external factors will allow an understanding of how the work relates to and/or has been influenced by a variety of contextual features. These could relate to key changes in the development of contemporary dance within the time frame of the area of study. Other external factors for consideration could also include artistic, historical, political, economic, sociological and educational issues.

Compulsory area of study: Rambert Dance Company (formerly Ballet Rambert) 1966–2002

The 1960s saw the start of a process to introduce modern dance to Britain. Ballet Rambert played a key part in this development and 1966 heralded a period of change in the company. Marie Rambert was encouraged by Norman Morrice, associate director, to make changes to the company, relating to the company size, the preservation and creation of works, the inclusion of Graham technique in the dancers' training, the involvement of guest choreographers and teachers, and the development of the touring schedule.

When Morrice left in 1974, John Chesworth continued Morrice's policies with the promotion of new work from company members and the expansion of the repertoire through guest choreographers. He was also instrumental in developing Rambert's educational activities.

Christopher Bruce became associate director in 1975 and then associate choreographer in 1979. From 1975 to 1985 there were links between Ballet Rambert and London Contemporary Dance Theatre through the use of choreographers eg Robert North and Richard Alston. In the 1980s the repertoire of Ballet Rambert focused on the work of three British choreographers: North, Bruce and Alston. North directed the company from 1981 to 1986 and was keen to develop the physicality, musicality and dramatic quality of the dancers.

Alston became resident choreographer in 1980 and artistic director in 1986, consolidating the Cunningham influence. The name of the company changed to Rambert Dance Company in 1987. Bruce returned to the company in 1994 as artistic director until 2002 and continued its development with the inclusion of a range of techniques, new works, guest choreographers and a repertoire of neoclassical and modern works.

Named practitioners

- Glen Tetley (1926–2007)
- Robert North (born 1945)
- Richard Alston (born 1948)
- Siobhan Davies (born 1950)
- Ashley Page (born 1956)

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE DANCE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF BOTH THE CHOREOGRAPHER AND THE GENRE

Rooster continued a trend that developed in Christopher Bruce's work in the 1980s of choreographing to cycles of songs, usually compilations he had chosen himself. This began in 1981 with the Holst songs for *Dancing Day* created for students of the Rambert Academy, and was followed by the highly acclaimed *Ghost Dances* for Ballet Rambert to Andean folk music. This latter showed a group of people in limbo between life and death re-enacting their fate on earth. The same year Bruce created *Holiday Sketches* to Billie Holiday songs for students of London Contemporary Dance School which he later reworked for the repertoires of Janet Smith and *Dancers*, Australian Dance Theatre and Nederlands Dans Theater. In 1984 Bruce followed the success of *Ghost Dances* with *Sergeant Early's Dream* which through Irish and American folk songs looked at the experience of displaced people (in this instance particularly Irish emigrants to the New World in the nineteenth century). At the same time Bruce was creating his dance-work evoking the life and times of John Lennon *The Dream Is Over*. (This is erroneously referred to as *Working Class Hero* in several of the reviews of *Rooster* – the critics clearly recalled the most effective number in the work.) Originally commissioned for a television documentary on Lennon and performed by the Cullberg Ballet the dances provide visual comments on his life. In the programme, shown on The South Bank Show on 30 November 1985, Bruce was also interviewed about the impact Lennon had made on him personally in the 1960s and 1970s. Sixteen months later *The Dream Is Over* was adapted for London Festival Ballet to perform onstage.

Given the inclusion of songs popularised by Joan Baez in *Sergeant Early's Dream* and the use of Lennon's music for *The Dream Is Over*, *Rooster* was the third work that Bruce has choreographed using music he grew up with. As he put it in an interview in *Dance and Dancers* (New Year 1993) 'I did the piece because I just loved the music – eight songs by the Rolling Stones, mostly numbers that I've lived with for twenty years'. Although the use of selections of popular song has been a feature of contemporary dance in the United

States of America – Twyla Tharp for example has repeatedly turned to this source using a wide selection of music from the Beach Boys for *Deuce Coupe* (1973) to Frank Sinatra for *Nine Sinatra Songs* (1982) – British choreographers have used them less frequently, at least until the 1980s.

Within these brief dance sketches performed to songs Bruce frequently draws choreographic motifs from the lyrics. This has been a feature of his work since his earliest creations and not restricted to his dance-works to popular songs. When reviewing *Living Space*, a dance set to poems by Robert Cockburn, Noel Goodwin in *Dance and Dancers* (January 1970 p35) observed Bruce 'occasionally taking a literal cue from the words'.

Basing a ballet around a succession of numbers inevitably makes it episodic; but each song is an individual miniature sketch which allows for considerable variety of mood and style within the complete ballet. Themes found in *Rooster* that are recognisable from Bruce's other works include, for example, references to children's behaviour. This featured more strongly in his work when his own children were younger, as he said in an interview in *The Times* (6 March 1981), 'You will see things about children in many of my works'. Social and folk dance are regularly drawn on and the duets in *Rooster* echo movement material from, for example, the second movement of Bruce's *Symphony in Three Movements* (1989). The stylised movement of 'Lady Jane' can be linked to the formal dances of the opening and close of Bruce's work for Rambert, *Ceremonies* (1986) in part inspired by the discoveries of the Elizabethan alchemist and Court astrologer Dr John Dee. Later works by Bruce in the structural style of *Rooster*, included *Moonshine* (1996) and *Grinning in your Face* (2001).

SPECIMEN QUESTIONS

Compulsory: The set work 'Rooster' (Bruce, 1991) within the context of the Rambert Dance Company (formerly Ballet Rambert) 1966 - 2002.

- 1) Describe **two** movement phrases performed by the male soloist in the opening moments of the first dance 'Little Red Rooster'. (4 marks)

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- 2) Explain how the theme of male chauvinism is established through the choreographic use of dancers in the opening dance 'Little Red Rooster'. (4 marks)

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3) Explain how the design of the dancers' costumes in the opening dance 'Little Red Rooster' reference fashion of the 1960s. (4 marks)

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4) Explain how the movement material in the second dance 'Lady Jane' relates to the specific themes of this dance. (5 marks)

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5) Describe the transition from the dance 'As Tears Go By' into the next dance 'Paint It Black'. (2 marks)

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6) Discuss the similarities and differences between the subject matter of 'Rooster' and the subject matter of **one** other work by Christopher Bruce. (6 marks)

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